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PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS

IN CHARGE OF
LUCY L. DROWN

THE BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL NURSES' CLUB

By EMILY O. BOSWALL

WE owe the inception of the Boston City Hospital Nurses' Club to the efforts of the Hon. Henry H. Sprague, chairman of the Training-School Committee, and to Dr. G. H. M. Rowe, superintendent of the hospital.

The outcome of their deliberations on the subject was the sending of a circular letter, in November, 1891, to the widely scattered graduates to ascertain their attitude towards the formation of a club.

This circular letter, signed by the Hon. H. H. Sprague, Dr. G. H. M. Rowe, and Miss Lucy L. Drown, the superintendent of nurses, set forth in detail the advantages and desirableness of such a club as their intentions projected.

To this circular letter were appended three questions:

"Question 1. Are you so situated that you generally or occasionally will attend the meetings of a nurses' club?"

"Question 2. Are you in favor of establishing a nurses' club on the above general basis?"

"Question 3. Will you join such a club if it be organized?"

Answers were requested by December 1. Numerous and hearty were the responses received to the letter, showing that the efforts of the promoters of the scheme were deeply appreciated by the graduates. Answers came from the women who had done the pioneer work of the Training-School, as well as from the later grades.

We quote verbatim from the report of the first meeting:

"January 5, 1892, forty-five non-resident graduates and fifty resident nurses of the Boston City Hospital Training-School for Nurses met in the parlors of the Nurses' Home to consider the expediency of organizing an association or society, to be composed of the Training-School nurses, with the view to encouraging and advancing their various interests. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Rowe."

Quite a number of the graduates had written to wish the club success, though for various reasons they were not able to attend its meetings.

Dr. Rowe set forth the aims and projects of the proposed club, talking along the lines of the circular letter, the key-note of his remarks being *esprit de corps*.

The nurses, being well-assured of the support and countenance of the hospital authorities, unanimously voted for the formation of a club.

The constitution, most comprehensive in detail and faultless in construction, was read and adopted. It has served for nine years. I do not think there has been an amendment added, a by-law adopted, or one of its provisions questioned.

Section 1 reads: "The Club is established for the benefit of the graduates and nurses of the Boston City Hospital Training-School for Nurses, and shall be called the Boston City Hospital Nurses' Club."

Undergraduates may be members, as well as graduates, signing the roll and attending the meetings being the requirements for membership. A member may invite a visitor, with the permission of the president. The constitution provides for the reception of honorary members, of whom Miss Linda Richards is one.

It was decided to meet at the Nurses' Home the first Tuesday in each month from November to May inclusive, the hour of meeting to be eight P.M., as at that time the day nurses of the hospital are at liberty.

All officers are elected by ballot except the president. The constitution reads: "The superintendent of nurses for the time being shall be president of the club." We have been fortunate in having the same president since our beginning.

It has been customary to select the first assistant superintendent of nurses for vice-president, and a graduate, resident in the hospital, for secretary. The reasons for this choice are apparent. The president and the secretary are, *ex officio*, members of all committees. We have had frequent changes in the vice-presidency, as the assistant superintendents of nurses leave one after another to take charge of hospitals. There have been four secretaries, and one of these served ably for over five years.

As there is no expense, except that which is voluntarily assumed, there is no treasurer. Our expenses are usually limited to the postal cards announcing the subjects for discussion on the several dates of the club meetings. At first a card was mailed monthly to each member, but now there is a printed programme for the season. One of these announcements mailed to each member puts her in touch with the work for the winter. Occasionally we have an illustrated lecture, and we meet the charges contingent to having stereopticon views. A collection

taken at some well-attended meeting generally produces funds enough for the expenses of the season.

The hospital provides the place of meeting and light refreshments. The supper is served by the resident graduates, who act as hostesses and give the tone to the after part of the meeting.

The various committees are composed of non-resident and resident members in due proportion. The date of graduation is always considered, so that earlier and later graduates meet intimately.

Nurses who are doing private nursing who have been elected to serve on some committee may be out of town on long cases, and thus be unable for a time to attend to the duties devolving on them. But they find when they do appear at club, the first Tuesday in any month from November to May, that their resident colleagues have ably attended to their several affairs, and there need be no regret for unavoidable delinquencies. All the appointments, elections, and arrangements tend towards permanency. The prevailing conditions are duly considered each year by the Nominating Committee.

Under our paternal government we flourish. Our meetings are pleasant and well-attended, except during seasons of epidemics. Then the non-resident members are decidedly in the minority.

The meetings of the club were held in the parlors of the Nurses' Home till we overflowed our boundaries. Then we gathered in a waiting-room of the Out-Patient Department. This latter place, while lacking the homelike appearance of the parlors, and perhaps to some degree interfering with the social intercourse, proved more satisfactory from an acoustic point of view, and gave a more business-like appearance to the meetings. The "cups that cheer but not inebriate" are always in evidence, and no nightmare may be credited to the refreshments served. It is now proposed to hold the club meetings in the spacious reception-hall of the Vose House, the new Nurses' Home. This home was made possible by the benevolence of Madam Vose, whose memory will live long and keep green in other hospitals besides the Boston City Hospital. The cheeriness of the surroundings in the reception-hall should certainly provoke displays of wit and wisdom, and insure a brilliant season to the club for 1900-1901.

During the nine years of the club's existence we have had papers on every subject pertaining to the nurse. We have considered her attitude to the patient, to the family, to the domestic, and last, but not least, to the physician. We have discussed everybody's attitude to the nurse; her clothing, on and off cases; hospital uniforms; her diet when she provides for herself and when she has to eat what others provide. We have decided what is best for her to do for recreation in the allotted time

off duty, in the waiting between cases, and in the vacation period. We have considered her preparation for entering a training-school, her varied life in different hospitals, her itinerant ministry after graduation, and the progressive methods of nursing which tend to keep her on a plane with the modern nurse.

We have had letters from one of our graduates, who is now an English army nurse. Perhaps the Sphinx looks solemnly down on her training-school badge, which she lost in the sands of the Egyptian desert, and wonders where the Boston City Hospital may be.

We hear from another graduate who is doing district nursing in London, and see how her work differs from the district nurses' work in Boston and in other American cities.

In the winter of 1898-1899 we had personal reminiscences from Montauk Point, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Fort Myer, Fortress Monroe, Tampa, and Cuba. We have letters from our graduates in Manila. We feel in touch with the world, but the fate of our missionary nurse in China is unknown.

Members of the visiting staff of physicians and surgeons have kindly given pleasant and profitable lectures, ranging from professional subjects to foreign travel. The superintendent, Dr. Rowe, has on several occasions provided the entertainment for the evening. When the occasion seemed to demand it, the club has had the use of the hospital amphitheatre, a lecture illustrated by stereopticon views being more effective there.

It would not be right to close this paper without mentioning the annual Christmas gathering at the Nurses' Home. This is older than the club, but is now a feature of it, and sometimes it takes the place of the January meeting. This gathering of the graduates is always of a social nature, and takes place sometime during Christmas week. The attire is more elaborate and the refreshments of a more festive character than at the usual monthly meeting.

The responsibility of sustaining and carrying forward the aims of the founders of this organization rests upon the present and future members of the school and the honorable body of graduates.

